

Talking Points
Mississippi Department of Corrections Annual Statewide Meeting
11 a.m., Tuesday, May 6, 2008
Jackson

- Commissioner Epps will introduce Governor Barbour
- We are recognizing the many outstanding employees of the Mississippi Department of Corrections
- Corrections professionals are to be commended for the bravery and great efforts they demonstrate daily as they tackle the challenges of making our communities a safer place to live
- During this week, National Correctional Officers' Week, (May 4-10, 2008) we recognize corrections officers for their tireless dedication to the business of corrections and you should be very proud of the trust the public places in you individually and as an agency (Governor Barbour signed proclamation on April 16th)
- Commissioner Epps has provided the leadership and given you the freedom to become successful leaders and innovative thinkers
- The mission and overriding priority of the MDOC is to provide for public safety. The over 3,000 dedicated, professional public employees of the MDOC do not take this responsibility lightly

- I truly appreciate the extremely difficult and dangerous job you perform daily. With nearly 23,000 (22,700) inmates incarcerated and about 30,000 (28,038) offenders on probation, parole, house arrest, or earned release supervision, the work you do is increasingly crucial
- What you understand is that the majority of inmates will eventually be released from incarceration. They will eventually go home. It is for this reason that we all care about inmate programs such as welding, machinery, cosmetology, agriculture, computer science, the GED and Adult Basic Education.
- I am especially pleased with the Faith Based Initiative at the Mississippi State Penitentiary. In partnership with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, it is supported in partnership with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. This program continues to grow. I remember it was around this time last year, that Marsha went to Parchman to witness 17 offenders graduate from this program.
- In Mississippi we must strive to promote strong family values and this is a vehicle for inmates to grow in their own faith and, in turn, reach out to others
- You understand that your daily priority of protecting and promoting public safety does not stop with confinement. You realize that to be truly successful in reducing the number of

individuals who return to prison you must offer programs that provide inmates skills to successfully live in their communities once released

- By providing measures to reduce the recidivism rate, you are in essence reducing the rate of victimization
- Although many taxpayers in Mississippi may not have a vivid picture of what you do daily, they do support your efforts. Mississippians appreciate the work of correctional staff; they do realize that corrections is a necessary part of the criminal justice system. They do their job by supporting MDOC. And they can comfortably sleep at night, knowing that you are doing yours
- We are recognizing five MDOC employees who have been nominated for Employee of the Year, as well as over 100 MDOC staff members who received recognition for their professionalism, dedication and hard work
- To the five nominees, [**Commander Barbara Tyler (Community Corrections-Region II), Mr. Stan Evans, Division Director I (Central Office), Ms. Cheryl Hall, Personnel Officer V (Central Mississippi Correctional Facility), Commander Wilfred Lunford (Mississippi State Penitentiary), and Sergeant Isom O'Banner (South Mississippi Correctional Facility)**], I want to express my sincere appreciation to each of

you for the manner in which you exercise your duties. Your colleagues respect you. On behalf of the people of this great state, we salute your integrity, your public service and your dedication to us all and offer you our deepest respect and thanks

- I value your commitment to public safety. Integrity, fairness, dependability, respect, competence, and openness are values which don't elude you. Like you, I care about the public, and the public's safety is paramount
- I proudly stand with you as we all serve the citizens of this great state of Mississippi